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Declaration by the United Nations of 8 and 9 May as days of remembrance and reconciliation

Letter dated 9 May 2005 from the Permanent Representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Concerning the commemoration at the United Nations of the end of the Second World War, the Permanent Mission of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela wishes to make the following comments.

Throughout our history, the people of Venezuela has shown its peaceful and pacifist nature and inclination in its international conduct. We have crossed our borders only in order to assist fraternal peoples in their fight against colonial oppression, from 1819 to 1826 under the leadership of the Liberator Simón Bolívar. Articles 1, 3, 13 and 152 of the Constitution reflect that humanist spirit:

> Article 1: "The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela is irrevocably free and independent and bases its moral heritage and its values of freedom, equality, justice and *international peace* on the doctrine of Simón Bolívar, the Liberator."
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> Article 3: "The State has as its essential goals the defence and development of the person and respect for his dignity, the democratic exercise of the people's will, *the construction of a just and peace-loving society*, the promotion of the prosperity and well-being of the people and the guarantee of the fulfilment of the principles, rights and duties consecrated in this Constitution.
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> Education and work are the fundamental processes for the achievement of those goals."
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> Article 13: "[...] *The Venezuelan geographical space is a zone of peace ...*"
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> Article 152: "The international relations of the Republic respond to the purposes of the State as they relate to the exercise of the sovereignty and the interests of the people; they are ruled by the principles of independence, equality among States, free determination and non-intervention in their

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internal issues, *peaceful solution of international conflicts*, cooperation, respect for human rights and solidarity among peoples in the fight for their emancipation and the well-being of humanity. The Republic will maintain the most firm and resolute defence of these principles and democratic practice in all international bodies and institutions."

In accordance with these principles, as a member of the United Nations and one of its founding States, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, on the occasion of the commemoration of the end of the Second World War, reaffirms its commitment to the peace which we all need and desire, but which is still threatened by the forces of destruction at the dawn of the twenty-first century.

The commemoration of that event prompts us to recall firstly that although the peoples of Western Europe and the United States of America, as victims, paid a heavy tribute in that worldwide conflagration in its aspect as an inter-imperialist struggle, we must not overlook the sufferings of other population groups as a result of that same armed conflict, conceived as a war of extermination against peoples. In that context, in addition to the high levels of death and suffering inflicted upon six million Jews in the concentration camps, a holocaust which merits full remembrance, we cannot overlook the undeniable magnitude of the sacrifice of the peoples which at that time made up the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, amounting to 27 million deaths, the price they paid for the defeat suffered in the Great Patriotic War by the powerful German military machine. It would also be unjust if we failed to commemorate the deaths and atrocities suffered by 20 million Chinese patriots and one million Koreans in their heroic resistance to the aggression by Japanese imperialism which began in 1937. That resistance impeded Japan's expansion in the Pacific and protected the rearguard of the Soviet Union, thereby contributing decisively to the triumph over fascism on the Eastern Front and the end of the war. Similarly, our commemoration should also include the undying memory of the holocaust of the Japanese people at Hiroshima and Nagasaki who were annihilated despite the certainty, already existing at the end of the European conflict, that the war was lost for Japan.

Despite the conclusion in May 1945 of the war in Europe, and the end of the conflict in Asia in September 1945, the imperialist States never ended their war against peoples through the sharing out of markets on the global scale, an aggression which followed its inexorable course and claimed lives in countries such as Algeria, Greece, India, Indonesia and Viet Nam, where the imperialist States sought to re-establish their pre-war colonial dominion, violently repressing the nascent impetus towards decolonization which had flowered as soon as the worldwide conflict had ended. This process has gone on continually up to the present.

We should also focus on another event which constituted a watershed in world history: the perverse use of atomic weapons against civilians in 1945, an act which brought about a qualitative change in the nature of war and shocked people throughout the world, bringing a new historical agent and global actor onto the scene: Humanity, which from that time onwards took responsibility for the rights and interests of the human species and the protection of the environment, both at risk of annihilation through nuclear apocalypse.

The ending of the war in 1945 also led to the birth of the United Nations, a world body inspired by principles and purposes which we embraced at the time of its founding and still defend consistently against threats of all kinds. However, with

the passage of time it has become clear that there is an urgent need to transform the Organization to bring it into line with the new realities of the twenty-first century. While many propose reforming the Charter and describe as anachronistic provisions such as Articles 53, 77 and 107, which refer to "enemy States", they say nothing of those others, Articles 23, 27, 86, 106 and 108-110, which refer to the allied Powers of the Second World War. Those Articles, however, are also obsolete, since they continue to ensure that the States which were victorious in the war enjoy a privileged position in the Organization.

Lastly, from the viewpoint of the States of South America, which were until the mid-twentieth century subjected to the British colonial yoke, shared successively with France and Germany, 1945 saw the inrush into the subcontinent of monopolistic capital from the United States and the imposition of that country's hegemony, despite some resistance, taking advantage of the ruin of the British Empire and the general breakdown in relations between Latin America and a European continent which had been occupied by the Nazis and devastated by war. As reflected in the minutes of the Council of Ministers for 8 and 15 February 1945, the Government of General Isaías Medina Angarita, President from 1941 to 1945 of what were then the United States of Venezuela, resisted pressure from the United States of America, which sought to persuade Venezuela to declare war on the Axis powers, threatening that if it refused to do so it would be prevented from taking part in the founding conference of the United Nations at San Francisco. The Venezuelan Government considered this situation in Cabinet, and its final response to that pressure was merely to recognize that a state of war existed "for the moment" between Venezuela and Germany and Japan.

We should be grateful if you would have this letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly.

(*Signed*) Fermín **Toro Jiménez**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative